

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION TO ALLEGATION THAT AMBASSADOR VOLPE ADVOCATED
NEW ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY. DC LEFT PARLIAMENTARIAN DONAT CATTIN'S ALLEGATION
THAT AMBASSADOR VOLPE ADVOCATED NEW ELECTIONS HAS PROVOKED STRONG
MEDIA REACTION AND EMBASSY DENIALS. DONAT CATTIN'S ACTION SEEN
AS WAY OF ATTACKING FANFANI. END SUMMARY.

2. IN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW APPEARING IN ALSESANDRO PERRONE'S LEFTIST
SECOLO XIX OF GENOA, LEFT DC PARLIAMENTARIAN CARLO DONAT CATTIN
ALLEGED THAT AMBASSADOR VOLPE HAD TOLD HIM IN PRIVATE
CONVERSATION THAT ITALY NEEDS A QUOTE GOOD ELECTORAL
CONSULTATION UNQUOTE. DONAT CATTIN WAS FURTHER QUOTED AS SAYING,
QUOTE THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED THE HOPE FOR A COALITION AMONG
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, LIBERALS AND REPUBLICANS.
ACCORDING TO VOLPE, THE COALITION SHOULD MAKE AN APPEAL TO
ITALIANS FOR NORMALIZATION OF POLITICAL LIFE THROUGH DEMOCRATIC
OPTIONS...THERE IS A MEETING OF MINDS REGARDING POLITICAL
ELECTIONS AMONG FANFANI, TANASSI, AND THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR
UNQUOTE. DONAT CATTIN CHARACTERIZED THIS AS QUOTE

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INTERFERENCE...IN A VERY SENSITIVE PHASE OF THE LIFE OF THE

NATION...UNQUOTE.

3. AN ACCOMPANYING COMMENTARY ENTITLED QUOTE THE TOO NUMEROUS TALKS OF JOHN VOLPE UNQUOTE IMPLIED THAT MEETINGS THE AMBASSADOR HELD WITH VARIOUS POLITICIANS AND OFFICIALS PRIOR TO THE LEONE VISIT AMOUNTED TO MEDDLING AND MANUIPULATION.

4. A THIRD ARTICLE CARRIED THE SUBSTANCE OF AN EMBASSY DENIAL OF THE ABOVE ALLEGATIONS. THE PAPER ACCURATELY QUOTED AN EMBASSY SPOKESMAN AS SAYING, QUOTE THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A REGRETTABLE MISUNDERSTANDING. PROBABLY DURING THE CONVERSATION SOME OF THE AMBASSADOR'S COMMENTS ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ITALY MUST HAVE BEEN MISINTERPRETED. VOLPE WOULD ABSOLUTELY NEVER HAVE SAID ANYTHING OF THE SORT UNQUOTE. THE PAPER ALSO CARRIED EMBASSY EXPLANATION TO EFFECT THAT QUOTE THE SUBJECT OF VOLPE'S MEETINGS WAS THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE VARIOUS ATTITUDES OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES. THESE ARE NORMAL CONTACTS THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAS FROM TIME TO TIME. ON THIS OCCASION VOLPE OBVIOUSLY WANTED TO ACQUAINT HIMSELF WITH THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION IN VIEW OF HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO THE US SO THAT HE COULD REPORT ON THE SUBJECT TO RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON. BUT NO PLANS TO ACT IN ONE DIRECTION OR THE OTHER WERE DISCUSSED. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WAS THE SUBJECT 'WHAT ACTION TO TAKE' UNQUOTE.

5. EVENING PAESE SERA LED FRONT PAGE WITH 6-COLUMN HEADLINE, QUOTE VOLPE TOLD ME: LET'S HAVE A GOOD ELECTORAL CONSULTATION; CLAMOROUS REVELATIONS OF DONAT CATTIN ON HIS TALK WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR. UNQUOTE. THE INSIDE STORY QUOTED EXTENSIVELY FROM THE SECOLO XIX INTERVIEW BUT ADDED NOTHING NEW.

6. DURING DAY MAJOR ITALIAN AND FOREIGN MEDIA QUERIED EMBASSY ON STORY AND DENIALS WERE REPEATED. FOLLOWING DAY, CORRIERE DELLA SERA CARRIED FRONT PAGE STORY IN WHICH DONAT CATTIN REAFFIRMED HIS ALLEGATION, SAYING QUOTE THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE IN ITALIAN AND I UNDERSTAND ITALIAN. THEREFORE I HEARD QUITE WELL. THE AMBASSADOR WOULD HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO DENY THE ALLEGATION, THAT'S A FACT OF DIPLOMATIC LIFE. BUT I AM IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE HABIT OF STATING CLEARLY HOW THINGS ARE UNQUOTE. THE ARTICLE THEN ACCURATELY QUOTED THE EMBASSY AS DENYING DONAT CATTIN'S ALLEGATIONS QUOTE IN THE NAME OF THE AMBASSADOR UNQUOTE.

7. COMMUNIST DAILY L'UNITA CARRIED FRONT PAGE COMMENTARY ON QUOTE THE MEETINGS AND PRESSURES OF AMBASSADOR JOHN VOLPE UNQUOTE ALLEGING THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD EXCEEDED THE NORMS

OF DIPLOMATIC BEHAVIOR BY INTRUDING IN ITALIAN POLITICS. IN TONGUE IN CHEEK COMMENTARY, INDEPENDENT BOLOGNA DAILY IL RESTO DEL CARLINO SARCASTICALLY CRITICIZED DONAT CATTIN FOR BEHAVING LIKE AN QUOTE UNCLE TOM UNQUOTE INSTEAD OF GETTING UP AND WALKING OUT IF THE AMBASSADOR HAD IN FACT SAID WHAT DONAT CATTIN ALLEGED. THE PAPER EXPRESSED DISAPPROVAL FOR QUOTE THE AMBASSADOR OF A GREAT COUNTRY WASTING HIS TIME TALKING WITH THE LIKES OF A DONAT CATTIN UNQUOTE.

8. THE PRESTIGIOUS IL GIORNALE SAW DONAT CATTIN'S ALLEGATIONS AS AN ATTACK ON FANFANI, USING THE AMBASSADOR AS THE BLUDGEON. THE PAPER THEN CRITICIZED DONAT CATTIN FOR REVEALING QUOTE FOR WHATEVER MOTIVE UNQUOTE A CONFIDENTIAL CONVERSATION. IT ADDED IF THIS WAS SUCH AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION, WHY DID NOT DONAT CATTIN REVEAL IT BEFORE THE LEONE VISIT IN ORDER TO PRE-EMPT ANY AMERICAN DESIGNS. BY HIS TIMING, IL GIORNALE SAID DONAT CATTIN'S PURPOSE WAS SOLELY TO ATTACK FANFANI. THE PAPER CONCLUDED THAT BY QUOTE CONTINUING TO OFFER (AS POLITICAL LEADERS) MEN OF DONAT CATTIN'S STAMP, THE DC WILL RUN VERY SERIOUS RISKS UNQUOTE. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT DAILY IL POPOLO HAS REMAINED SILENT.

9. COMMENT. THE PRESS FLURRY DONAT CATTIN'S ALLEGATIONS HAVE STIRRED UP MUST BE SEEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF CHARGES AND INNUENDOS IN THE LEFTIST PRESS REGARDING ALLEGED AMERICAN PRESSURE TO FORCE ITALY TO THE RIGHT. THESE CHARGES SURFACED DURING AND AFTER THE LEONE VISIT (ROME 13593) AND MERGED WITH PRESS PLAY GIVEN TO REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO SECRETARY KISSINGER ABOUT THE NEED T TAKE ACTION IF NECESSARY TO PREVENT ITALY FROM GOING COMMUNIST. THE COMMUNISTS AND MANY IN THE PSI AND DC LEFT ARE CONCERNED BY THE STRNG OPPOSITION PRODUCED IN RECENT WEEKS TO INCREASED PUBLIC DEBATE ON POSSIBLE FUTURE PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT. THEY ARE WORRIED THAT DC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERS WILL SEIZE ON THE ANTI-COMMUNIST ISSUE AND USE IT TO EFFECT AGAINST THEM. THEY ARE THEREFORE QUICK TO PUBLICIZE ANY INDICATION, HOWEVER VAGUE, OF US SUPPORT FOR FANFANI OR OTHERS CURRENTLY ADVOCATING A TOUGH ANTI-COMMUNIST LINE. IN ADDITION, DONAT CATTIN IS UNQUESTIONABLY USING HIS CONTRIVED EXPRESSION OF SHOCK AT ALLEGED STATEMENTS MADE TO HIM BY AMBASSADOR VOLPE AS A MEANS OF GETTING AT FANFANI AND INSURING MAXIMUM PUBLICITY FOR HIS ASSAULT.

WE BELIEVE THAT PRESS TREATMENT OF THIS AFFAIR IS BEGINNING TO CONCENTRATE ON THE DONAT CATTIN FEUD WITH FANFANI. BEAUDRY

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